



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
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NEWS RELEASE

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Commissioner Gist: R.I. to receive full funding for Race to the Top grant State to receive \$50 million to advance early learning

At a news conference today (December 19, 2011) to celebrate the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist announced that Rhode Island will receive the full amount requested in the grant application: \$50 million over four years.

Last Friday, the U.S. Department of Education, along with the Department of Health and Human Services, announced that Rhode Island is one of 9 winners of a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant,

Last year, the Education Department awarded Rhode Island a Race to the Top grant of \$75 million to transform education across the state. Today's award makes Rhode Island one of only 6 states to win two Race to the Top awards.

"Part of the reason our grant application was successful has been the tremendous teamwork we have developed in the early-childhood field," Commissioner Gist said. "Our goal is to continue working together to make Rhode Island schools – including our preschools and early-learning programs – America's best!"

Commissioner Gist thanked Governor Lincoln D. Chafee, the Rhode Island Congressional delegation (Senators Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse and Representatives James Langevin and David Cicilline), the General Assembly leadership (House Speaker Gordon D. Fox and Senate President M. Teresa Paiva Weed), Providence Mayor Angel Taveras, and the Board of Regents for their support for early learning and for this grant application.

The R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) developed the grant application with the leadership of the Rhode Island Early Learning Council, which includes several key partners in the grant: the Executive Office of Health & Human Services (Steven M. Costantino, secretary); the Department for Children, Youth, and Families (Janice E. DeFrances, Ed.D., director); the Department of Health (Michael Fine, M.D., director); the Department of Human Services (Sandra Powell, director); and Rhode Island KIDS COUNT (Elizabeth Burke Bryant, executive director and co-chair of the Council).

The council membership also includes representatives of Beautiful Beginnings Child Care Center, Brown University, Family Child Care Homes of Rhode Island, Hasbro Children's Hospital, the Providence Public Schools, Ready to Learn Providence, the Rhode Island

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Association for the Education of Young Children, the Rhode Island Child Care Facilities Fund, the Rhode Island Foundation, Rhode Island Head Start, the Rhode Island Training and Technical Assistance Center, United Way of Rhode Island, the University of Rhode Island Child Development Center, and the Westbay Children's Center.

The Rhode Island application focused on four main categories of action:

- developing high-quality, accountable programs;
- promoting early learning and development outcomes for children;
- building a great early-childhood education workforce; and
- measuring outcomes and progress.

Some examples of the work that the grant will support include:

- revising and expanding the child-care program quality-rating system (Brightstars) to provide the training, guidance, and incentives to raise the quality of all early learning programs;
- providing high-quality professional development and increased access to higher education to individuals working in early-learning programs;
- building upon our statewide data systems to develop clear, accurate, in-depth knowledge about all of our children, their teachers, and all of our schools and programs and to monitor students' progress and success from birth through their college years; and
- working with educators and assessments experts to develop a statewide "kindergarten-entry assessment" so that we better understand what instructional support our youngest children need and what strengths they bring as they arrive for their first day of school.

To view the Rhode Island application, go to:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/OSCAS/earlychild/>

For more information about the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, see:

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/faq.html>

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